

# **Crime Victims Needs Assessment**

*Prepared for*

**The Wisconsin Department of Justice  
Office of Crime Victim Services**

**and**

**Citizens of Judicial District 1**

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# Introduction

**I**n 2005 the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Office of Crime Victim Services began a journey to develop a Crime Victim Needs Assessment process to document all crime-related services across the State of Wisconsin and to understand the needs of counties and tribal communities. The goal is to document crime victims' unmet needs and communities' priorities related to crime victim services. As such, this project:

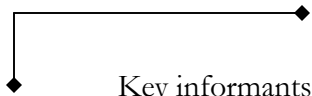
- ✓ Gathers comprehensive/consistent information from Wisconsin counties and tribes
- ✓ Assists communities to collaboratively set priorities
- ✓ Disseminates results in user-friendly format
- ✓ Reflects viewpoints of crime victims

In 2006 World Bridge Research began assisting the Department of Justice with this Crime Victim Needs Assessment effort using an approach called Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR was developed in contrast to conventional research approaches. PAR is characterized by having three primary components: 1) an iterative process for conducting research that includes reflection and action; 2) having community members and stakeholders involved with the research process; and 3) using findings to promote positive community change. These three approaches are interwoven throughout the project design and provide for a richer and more culturally sensitive assessment than a researcher directed traditional approach. Essentially PAR is research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it.

*Essentially Participatory Action Research (PAR) is research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it.*

To document all crime-related services and unmet needs across Wisconsin, the Needs Assessment project began by interviewing key informants (victim/witness specialists/coordinators, law enforcement agencies [county and municipal], community service providers and representatives from local departments of human services) in each county and tribal community. Appointments were made with individuals and groups to ask them questions about:

- ✓ Community composition
- ✓ Services available to victims of crime
- ✓ Community assets
- ✓ Unmet needs of crime victims
- ✓ The underserved
- ✓ Crime trends
- ✓ Victim rights
- ✓ Innovative programs



Key informants were also asked to fill out a questionnaire about unmet needs at the end of the interview. The survey and interview questions shared some similar topics with the interviews providing an opportunity for the research team to learn the insights and reasons behind interviewees' perspectives. A second round of key informant interviews were held with named victim service agencies and other agencies or groups providing victim services programming that were deemed innovative and not known by victim service grant makers.

To build upon the iterative process for assessment and action, findings from the key informant interviews and surveys were presented at the District 1 Priority Setting meeting on March 4, 2008. The meeting featured two parts – reflection and discussion about the findings from the interviews and surveys followed by a consensus building method using group participation technologies to identify recommendations for funding priorities for crime victim services needs and gaps.

In a final step for the district, the emerging recommendations were incorporated into an internet based survey tool which sought to prioritize the recommendations. Interviewed key informants, participants of the district meeting and all other known service providers in the district were asked to complete the survey.

*The three initial steps – interviews and surveys, district meeting and on-line survey – are summarized in this report.*

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These key informant interviews and surveys are to be rounded out with interviews and focus groups with victims/survivors of crime, members of underserved communities and representatives of statewide organizations. Also, an advisory group of victims, former victims and survivors from across the state oversees various aspects of the Needs Assessment's implementation.

# Summary

Judicial District 1 is comprised of Milwaukee county. Nine individuals were interviewed and four completed surveys, 28 participated at the district meeting and 21 responded to the follow-up online survey.

The following summaries were created from the key informant interviews and surveys collected in Judicial District 1.

## **Crime trends:**

- ✓ Crimes against the elderly
- ✓ Drug related crimes
- ✓ Interpersonal crimes

## **Assets - commonly referred to services:**

- ✓ Crime Response Team
- ✓ Interfaith agencies
- ✓ Sexual assault advocates
- ✓ Domestic violence advocates
- ✓ Emergency room response to gun violence

## **Underserved crime victims:**

- ✓ Non-English speaking victims (Hmong, Hispanics and Russians)
- ✓ Native American victims
- ✓ Single parents without good support systems
- ✓ Victims with mental health needs
- ✓ Victims of sexual assault and their families
- ✓ Elderly victims

## **Existing innovative services:**

- ✓ Crime Response Team

**Programs on key informants' "wishlist" include:**

- ✓ More mental health services
- ✓ More counseling for sexual assault victims and sexual assault services
- ✓ More affordable transportation
- ✓ "Safe discharging" from hospitals for elders with mental health issues
- ✓ Prevention programs
- ✓ Affordable day care for domestic violence and sexual assault victims  
testifying and trying to get jobs
- ✓ More on-scene crime scene victim advocates
- ✓ Witness protection services

**A**t the district meeting, participants reflected on the above findings and used a consensus process to answer the question "What are our recommendations for 2008 funding priorities for victim services?" In a follow-up online survey District residents were asked to prioritize the recommendations. The ranked recommendations were:

1. Community and family centered trauma services
2. You can't manage a crisis if you can't manage to live
3. Collaborative victim centered initiatives
4. Victim and witness support, protection and restoration
5. Quality, affordable legal services and advocacy
6. Violence prevention services  
and  
Language and culture services (tie for sixth place)
7. Continuum of care for empowerment
8. Service delivery assessment and evaluation



A complete depiction of the ideas and victim needs that make up each funding recommendation can be found on page 12.

# Findings from Key Informant Interviews

**K**ey informants from Judicial District 1 representing victim/witness specialists/coordinators, sheriff's offices, community service providers and departments of human services were interviewed in February - March 2008. A total of nine individuals were interviewed (six women and three men) in four interview settings. Four of the interviewees completed needs assessment surveys. The following summarizes the themes that emerged from these interviews and the unanimous findings from the small sample of surveys.

## ***Crime Trends***

**S**ome of the emerging crime trends that were discussed by key informants include crimes against the elderly, drug related crimes and interpersonal crimes.

Crimes against the Elderly: Financial abuse of the elderly is thought to be an emerging problem in Judicial District 1. Fraud committed by relatives or care givers seems to be on the rise and underreported. Identity theft and property crimes including stealing prescription drugs from the elderly also is a perceived emerging issue.

Drug Related Crimes: Many informants believe Milwaukee is a drug trafficking gateway between Chicago and Green Bay, Madison and Minnesota. There is a perception that drug trafficking is on the rise.

On a different note many key informants talked about the collateral crime related to the stealing, abusing and selling of prescription drugs. There is a perception that the severity of interpersonal crime may be increasing due to drug abuse and related crimes.

Interpersonal Crimes: Many key informants perceive an increase in domestic violence, child sexual abuse, physical assault and neglect. There is a perception that the violence used in the interpersonal crimes is more severe. This trend about the severity of violence is also noted in domestic violence situations. There is also perceived "climate of fear" by many key informants. People are afraid to participate in cases where retaliation may occur.

## ***Underserved Populations***

**I**n key informant interviews Hmong, Hispanics and Russians are viewed as the most underserved because of the need for interpreters. However, there is the perception that Hmong and Native American communities take care of themselves. It was also mentioned that single parents without good support systems have problems.

When completing the survey, the interviewees unanimously included child sexual abuse victims, and victims of financial fraud and identity theft as underserved.





## **Services “Wishlist”**

**W**hen asked what kinds of services victims are commonly referred to for assistance and support, many key informants indicated: Crime Response Team, interfaith agencies, sexual assault advocates, domestic violence advocates and emergency room response to gun violence. The surveys added substance abuse assessment, prevention and treatment; mental health services and supervised visitation/exchange centers to the list of assets. Some interviewees did identify Crime Response Team as a unique or innovative program.

On the same note key informants also identified programs and services they wish they had available in their local community:

- ✓ More mental health services
- ✓ More counseling for sexual assault victims and sexual assault services
- ✓ More affordable transportation
- ✓ “Safe discharging” from hospitals for elders with mental health issues
- ✓ Prevention programs
- ✓ Affordable day care for domestic violence and sexual assault victims testifying and trying to get jobs
- ✓ More on-scene crime scene victim advocates
- ✓ Witness protection services

Assets key informants wish were available include:

- ✓ More affordable housing

## **Victim Rights Difficult to Enforce**

**M**ost informants positively discussed the victim rights notification process used in their community. However, when asked about which rights were difficult to enforce it was suggested that victims often want restitution, but there is a perception that they will never receive it. It was also mentioned that the victim waiting room in the courthouse is very rundown. There is a need for child care when victims are testifying in court. It is also difficult for victims to pay for parking downtown while attending court proceedings.

# District Meeting Findings and Prioritization Survey

**T**wenty-eight people representing Milwaukee County, the only county in Judicial District 1, attended the Priority Setting Meeting on March 4, 2008. The group included two district attorney office victim/witness staff, nine domestic violence or sexual assault community organization staff members, two department of human services staff members, four staff from hospital/health systems, nine staff from community organizations such as American Indian Task Force, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center, Kids Matter, Legal Action and NOVA Service, and one staff member from the Milwaukee Police Department. Two representatives from the Office of Crime Victim Services (OCVS) were also present.

An overview of the OCVS needs assessment project was presented including the findings from interviews with people conducted in the district during February and March, 2008.

For the meeting, the findings discussed previously in this report were grouped to create a cohesive, flowing story of the interview and survey progress. The sections included: Crime Trends, Assets, Underserved Populations, Innovative Services and “Wishlist” and Crime Victims Rights.

## **Crime Trends**

**T**he group discussed which of the identified crime trends mirrored what they saw in their work and what is missing:

- ✓ We need somewhere for kids to go when they have problems with abuse.
- ✓ For homeless veterans Drug and alcohol crimes are an issue for.
- ✓ There is concern about post traumatic stress disorder for veterans coming home now and prevalence of violence and training for killing replacing prior fear to use violence.
- ✓ Important to note that youth and gang violence are two different things. Also random gun violence is prevalent in the community.
- ✓ Added to the severity of interpersonal violence is the pervasiveness of violence – the randomness makes the violence feel like it’s everywhere; it links to the sense that there is no where to go, sense that “that’s just the way it is”.
- ✓ Sexual and domestic violence don’t even make the list of trends because they are so pervasive.
- ✓ We need to know about who the perpetrators are and what the trends are in their lives – what has their upbringing been like? What external factors have influenced their lives? Some are noting that perpetrators are younger than before and lacking in parental role models and social skill development.

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- ✓ We are seeing effects of the snowball of kids being victims of domestic violence, abuse, etc. and not given services at the time. The number of underserved former victims who are now perpetrators is much higher than previous years.
- ✓ Many people's lives include history of poverty, low education, no employment in many generations of their families. Presence of entrenched poverty is highly linked to gun crime and murder – children are seeing incredible violence through families and friends being killed – ends up not being random because it's part of people's lives and touching them.

### ***Assets, Wishlist and Underserved Populations***

The group discussed where underserved populations are being addressed and what other populations were not identified by those interviewed:

- ✓ Urban Indian community is another “tribal community”. Native American population crosses through all other underserved populations noted and they experience lots of intergenerational violence and crime that was mentioned.
- ✓ Some would like to see African Americans as a particular underserved population – want to speak to African American youth and their experience with extreme violence that will not be helped by basketball programs. We need to address their experience with trauma. African American youth will not want to go for mental health counseling but need some kind of program that will prevent further violence. The group wondered what happened that African Americans was left out of underserved populations – it was speculated that other ethnic/racial groups might experience what has been happening in African American communities in the future and we can learn from their experience.
- ✓ Rise in young girls being violent to other girls with heightened violence and use of technology like the internet.
- ✓ Hispanic community is underserved – hardly see Latino kids because they can not make it to the programs or do not know about services and how to get help.
- ✓ Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender folks are within every underserved population identified.

The group wanted to include the following as new services or things that should be in place to help with crime victim needs:

- ✓ Twenty-four hour day care.
- ✓ No services for former victims who are now victimizing others, mostly youth who are hurting other youth.
- ✓ Second-hand post traumatic stress – Youth see their friends or family members shot and killed and are never given a place to deal with it but are expected to go to school and continue with life as usual.
- ✓ Project Ujima, only service for youth victims of severe violence in Milwaukee has only five staff and needs more help. More organizations should work with this population.

- ✓ Culturally specific advocacy.
- ✓ Victim services that are used to serving adults need to make transition to working with youth and the special needs of youth.
- ✓ Need to tap into best practice models of collaboratively working with youth or sexual assault victims or other populations. Currently no money to provide the kind of comprehensive services that are needed.
- ✓ Help for men who are victims of sexual assault.
- ✓ Translation and interpreters are not available.
- ✓ Schools should include services to handle pervasive problems modeled after other communities that are successful in this area.
- ✓ Milwaukee County health care system staff are not present in the network of community based services and they should be.
- ✓ Education and outreach to local population and community – help people understand what’s happening and help people see that violence such as domestic abuse is not acceptable or the norm.
- ✓ Camp for child victims of violence – replace counseling with something that seems fun for the kids.
- ✓ Security guards in school but no preventionists in the schools – we need a state coalition to put prevention in the schools – need people who have regular interaction with youth to focus on prevention of violence.
- ✓ Protection of victim/witnesses when asked to participate in court cases.
- ✓ Child therapists that accept Title 19 and can take more than one child on case load.
- ✓ Need safe homeless shelters and domestic violence shelters who accept gay men and transgender folks.
- ✓ More legal services for victim education and legal representation especially for domestic violence – would like to help people understand the legal system.
- ✓ Ways to hold courts and criminal justice system responsible for sentencing especially judges including those in children’s court.

### ***Crime Victims’ Rights***

**T**he group wanted to add the following issues to the list of victim rights concerns:

- ✓ Children’s court probation officers and general crime probation agents do not or might not have any contact with victims.
- ✓ District attorney funding crisis is currently heightened – too grant reliant; could be no specialty prosecution and loss of services if the crisis is not addressed.
- ✓ Crime victim compensation and restitution are issues – true for juvenile system especially because youth can not pay restitution.
- ✓ Previously lag in time for getting referrals to restitution program for juveniles caused loss in grant funding.
- ✓ Advocacy all the way through the process from first report to prosecution and healing.

For the second part of the meeting, participants incorporated the interview findings and their reflections into a consensus process to answer the question “What are our recommendations for 2008 funding priorities for victim services?” The recommendations list appears below and more details are available in Appendix A, page 12.


**I**n a final step to understand the victim services needs in District 1, these emerging recommendations were incorporated into an internet based survey tool which sought to prioritize the recommendations. Interviewed key informants, participants from the district meeting and all other known service providers in the district were asked to complete the survey. Twenty-one individuals representing Milwaukee county voted to prioritize the needs.

The ranked recommendations were:

1. Community and family centered trauma services
2. You can't manage a crisis if you can't manage to live
3. Collaborative victim centered initiatives
4. Victim and witness support, protection and restoration
5. Quality, affordable legal services and advocacy
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## Implications

**F**or District 1 citizens prioritizing funding for **Community and family centered trauma services** was essential. This recommendation captured the need to recognize and address the effects of trauma caused by crime not just on the victims of crime but their families and the general community. Many believe that improvements are needed in available services, making them more understanding and helpful with trauma affects. In addition, new services are needed that are better equipped to assist victims through the aftermath of crime especially child and youth victims. District residents support clustered community based services which bring the resources directly to crime victims by placing the services in their neighborhoods, schools and places of worship and making them easily accessible together. This priority recognizes the need for counseling and mental health services that many crime victims lack or are unable to access as identified by those interviewed in the district. It also seeks to capitalize on already perceived assets such as



interfaith agencies and put into place crime scene response that was called for on the interview wishlist.

With the second priority, **You can't manage a crisis if you can't manage to live**, the community recognized the fundamental need for basic resources for living - food, transportation, housing, and child care. Priority was given to funding support for these basic needs and providing these basic resources for victims of crime as they deal with the justice system. This priority was recognized in the interviews with the call for more transportation and affordable housing.

The next two funding priorities identified by District 1 included new and innovative resources for crime victims. **Collaborative victim centered initiatives** feature services such as an interpersonal violence coordinator and private/public partnerships. Similarly, the **Victim witness support, protection and restoration** funding priority identifies victim witness protection program and restorative justice as two critical services needed in the district. These two priorities highlight the need to keep victims at the center of the crime response, prioritizing their safety and support. These priorities recognize and seek to address the barriers in victims' lives that keep them from assisting the system in bringing perpetrators to justice. In addition, the priorities raise the issue that collaboration and cooperation is needed between and among systems and services for victims to successfully navigate their way to healing.

# Appendix A

| What are our recommendations for 2008 funding priorities?  |   |  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| Community and family centered trauma services  | You can't manage a crisis if you can't manage to live   | Victim and witness support, protection and restoration   | Collaborative victim centered initiatives   | Quality, affordable legal services and advocacy   | Continuum of care for empowerment  | Violence prevention services  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Locate services where the action is – schools, nursing homes, district police stations, etc.</li> <li>✓ School based services</li> <li>✓ Community trauma response to violence team</li> <li>✓ One stop shop – services accessible and convenient to families</li> <li>✓ Expand crisis response advocacy crime scene response</li> <li>✓ More faith based / grassroots interaction</li> <li>✓ Family centered support services</li> <li>✓ Counseling – comprehensive, affordable for victims and family (voucher)</li> <li>✓ Trauma services</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Basic needs – housing, food, transportation</li> <li>✓ Housing: full spectrum of housing needs</li> <li>✓ "no costs"</li> <li>✓ victim services</li> <li>✓ Transportation – need it now</li> <li>✓ Child care services – free or reduced while v/w involved in system</li> <li>✓ Housing (transitional/perm.)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Victim witness protection program</li> <li>✓ Support/ protection during the court process (childcare, legal ed, transportation, etc)</li> <li>✓ Victim witness protection and/or relocation</li> <li>✓ Restorative justice for juvenile crimes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Victim agency collaboration</li> <li>✓ Fund inter-personal violence coordinator</li> <li>✓ Emphasizing partnership programs – private/ public as well as non-profits</li> <li>✓ Comprehensive crime victim services list – who accepts what insurance? – non-profits?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Legal services – assessable quality legal services</li> <li>✓ More advocacy within and in conjunction with police</li> <li>✓ Permanent funding for prosecutor program</li> <li>✓ Legal services affordable to all victims</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Follow up case management beyond the crisis</li> <li>✓ Balancing between crisis &amp; healing</li> <li>✓ Life skills &amp; relationship building</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Prevention services in community youth programs</li> <li>✓ Prevention programs for perpetrators</li> <li>✓ More faith based/ grassroots interaction</li> </ul> |
|  |   |  |   | <div> <div>Service delivery assessment and evaluation</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Victim evaluation of services</li> <li>✓ Innovation – invest \$ in new ideas</li> <li>✓ Maintain current effective programs</li> </ul> </div>                            |  |   |
|  |   |  |   | <div> <div>Language and cultural services</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Translation services</li> <li>✓ Language services</li> </ul> </div>  |  |   |